

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 are cancelled. Claims 12 and 23 are hereby amended. New claims 24 and 25 are added. No new matter has been added by way of these amendments.

Claim 12 has been amended to recite that “*several add-on sectors assembled in a clamped arrangement such that said sectors form a protective envelope surrounding the tube*” as described in paragraph [0015] and shown in the exploded diagram of Figure 2. Similarly, claim 23 has been amended to include the clamped arrangement of add-on sectors being independent of a geometric shape of the through orifices of the tube.

The examiner acknowledges that Malone (US 6,328,112) does not disclose several add-on sectors. Instead Malone teaches a single cover member 504 that slideably engages over an opening. Thus Malone does not disclose several sectors, or more importantly, that such several sectors are assembled in clamped arrangement to form a protective envelope surrounding the tube.

It is clear from Malone that the single cover member 504 is slideably engaged in a seat that does not surround the tube. In addition, since the cover 504 of Malone is slideably engaged it cannot be assembled or disassembled easily.

New claim 24 is based on independent claim 12 combined with dependent claim 17, which the examiner indicated would be allowable. Similarly, new claim 25 is based on independent claim 12 combined with dependent claim 22, which the examiner indicated would be allowable.

This paper is submitted in response to the Office Action dated November 28, 2007 for which the three-month date for response is February 28, 2008. A request for a three (3) month extension of the time to respond to the Official Action is hereby made, bringing the date for

response to May 28, 2008. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-2183 (Ref. No. 21.1056).

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned patent attorney at 281.285.6493 with any questions, comments or suggestions relating to the referenced patent application.

Respectfully submitted,

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